

By RALPH R. SHAW

Distinguished Agricultural Librarians

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LIBRARIANS SERVE. In a research institution their service covers not only the work incident to the organization and use of published materials but it includes, in addition, intensive work with the content of publications. At times they even create new tools to facilitate the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. They want no more than the privilege of serving, and they serve so quietly that frequently the contributions they make to research and, indeed, to the welfare of mankind are not very generally known.

Among the outstanding tools of bibliographical research which are prepared in the Department of Agriculture Library are the Plant Science Catalog, the *Index . . . to the Literature of American Economic Entomology*, and our series of bibliographical publications in agricultural economics, which include a monthly review of the literature of agricultural economics and rural sociology, as well as hundreds of special bibliographies.

These three major contributions to the work of the department were, respectively, the work of Alice Cary Atwood, Mabel Colcord, and Mary G. Lacy, all of whom, interestingly enough, entered the service of the department library in the first ten days of July in 1904 and all of whom have retired during the past few months, after contributing a total of more than

a hundred years of intelligent interest and leadership to the task of putting knowledge to work.

Although their part in the building of these tools is now history, their work lives on in usefulness and will, we hope, continue to grow through the efforts of staff members whom they have trained.

It is impossible to put into print the full flavor of the personalities, perseverance, judgment, and the countless other attributes which have gone into the creation of these tools as a part of the heritage of future research and administration. This brief sketch of the careers of these three outstanding contributors to research, to bibliography, and to library administration is intended both as a tribute to their accomplishments and to make their contributions more widely known, so that they may increasingly serve the purposes for which they were designed.

ALICE CARY ATWOOD. Alice Cary Atwood, who first came to work for the Department of Agriculture Library as cataloger in 1904, has just the combination of education, scholarly interest, and wholehearted application to the work in hand to make her an outstanding bibliographer.

A graduate of St. Lawrence University, she continued her education both in library science, with courses at Drexel Institute, and in botany, with courses in morphological and physiological botany at Cornell University. Her first scientific biblio-

graphical work was at Arnold Arboretum, where she worked on *The Bradley Bibliography* for two years.

After two years as a cataloger in the department library she was transferred to the rolls of the Bureau of Plant Industry in 1906, and since that time she has been one of the mainsprings in the department's mechanism for botanical bibliographical work. At first, in collaboration with Marjorie F. Warner and Eunice Rockwood Oberly, and finally in sole charge of the project, she developed the Plant Science Catalog of the department library, which now contains approximately six hundred thousand cards in its author, botanical, and plant industry sections.

Although this project was initiated by Dr. Coville in 1896, it was not really begun until 1903. Thus Miss Atwood's contact with this work, ranging as it did from 1906 to date, spans in effect the history of this tool.

Plant Science Catalog

The Plant Science Catalog has never attempted to be all-inclusive. Its usefulness, therefore, may be attributed more to Miss Atwood's discriminating selection of the important literature than to its size alone. In this work she was always able to obtain the interest and active cooperation of plant scientists and botanists in the department, and the resultant tool is recognized as a primary bibliographical source not only in the department but by plant scientists all over the country. Its use as a reference tool increased as the catalog grew until, at the present time, it is used more by assistants in the library in answering reference and bibliographical questions in the field of plant sciences coming from all over the world than it is by all others together.

In addition to the Plant Science Catalog Miss Atwood has been engaged in many other bibliographical projects in the field of botanical plant science literature, such as "The Catalogue of the Botanical Library of John Donnell Smith,"¹ *Description of the Comprehensive Catalogue of Botanical Literature in the Libraries of Washington*,² "Important Errors in Lindau and Sydow's Thesaurus,"³ "Errors in Lindau's Thesaurus and Saccardo's Sylloge,"⁴ and "Bibliographical Notes."⁵ She has also published bibliographies on orchid literature, state and local floras, daffodil literature, and a number of other subjects in the scientific press.

Her interest in general bibliographical problems is clearly shown by her article, "The Increase in Scientific Periodicals since the Great War,"⁶ and her latest publication, *Geographical Guide to Floras of the World*,⁷ done in collaboration with Dr. S. F. Blake as the senior author, is an indication of the level of subject competence attained in her bibliographical work.

The Plant Science Catalog has been housed in the main library since 1923 to make it more accessible to readers who use it in conjunction with the department library catalog, the collections of the department library, and other bibliographical tools.

One of the important by-products of Miss Atwood's bibliographical work was improved and intensified selection and acquisition of important botanical publications. This has strengthened the de-

¹ *Contributions from U.S. National Herbarium*, v. 12, pt. 1, 198. 94p.

² U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry. Circular 87, 1911. 7p.

³ *Mycologia* 3:1-12, 1911.

⁴ *Mycologia* 12:169-71, 1920.

⁵ *Mycologia* 15:103-05, 1923.

⁶ *Science* 65:255-56, March 11, 1927.

⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Miscellaneous Publication* 401, 1942. 336p.

partment library and has increased its potential for service to the department and to the country at large.

Miss Atwood's own approach to the purpose of bibliography is clearly shown in her *Description of the Comprehensive Catalogue of Botanical Literature*, in which, on page 7, she says: "The catalog is only a tool for the use of the worker in botanical literature. . . ." Never did the catalog become to her or her staff an end in itself, and the result has been a tool of ever increasing usefulness.

As an administrator Miss Atwood succeeded in developing assistants who aided in the work of compilation of the Plant Science Catalog and who now carry on this work.

Miss Atwood's membership in professional associations parallels her work interests by combining membership in the American Library Association, the D.C. Library Association, and the American Association of University Women with membership in the Botanical Society of Washington.

Miss Colcord's Contribution

MABEL COLCORD. Mabel Colcord came to the department library with a very well-rounded background of public, scholarly, and administrative library work. After graduation from Radcliffe College and the New York State Library School she served as assistant in the Young Men's Association Library in Albany, in the New York State Traveling Library Division, as assistant cataloger at the State University of Iowa Library, as assistant librarian in charge of the State University of Iowa Library, and as classifier and cataloger at the Nevada Public Library, Nevada, Iowa.

Her most outstanding single contribu-

tion in the field of bibliographical work is the *Index . . . to the Literature of American Economic Entomology*, which is published each five years by the American Association of Economic Entomologists. In this highly specialized field Miss Colcord was able to enlist the assistance of entomologists, both in the department and out, to such an extent that these quinquennial volumes are the standard tools of entomologists all over the world.

Dr. Leland O. Howard, chief of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine during most of the time that Miss Colcord served, reports that an entomologist who was calling upon him said, "Miss Colcord's *Index* is the finest and most perfect of its kind. It is worth everything to all of us." Dr. Howard adds: "And that is the opinion of all the entomologists of the country. It is a first-class thing done by a master." The cooperative arrangements with the American Association of Economic Entomologists, which makes publication of this *Index* possible, has given it maximum availability and usefulness to entomologists, and its praises may be found throughout entomological literature.

As librarian of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine Library and, later, chief of the entomological work of the department library, Miss Colcord is not only a distinguished librarian and bibliographer but also a good friend. She has no equal in telling stories, and if she could be persuaded to put her store of library lore into writing, it would not only be one of the best classics of librarianship but would be by far the most readable and enjoyable. She writes poetry and can make up rhymes and jingles to suit any occasion. Her loyalty to associates and friends, her understanding, sympa-

thetic, and helpful approach to all problems balanced the high standards of performance she required of her staff, and our greatest joy in the day's work is when Miss Colcord comes in to continue some bibliographical work she has always wanted to get done but never had time to do as long as she bore responsibility for the selection of materials to be added to our entomology collection, for bibliographical and reference work in entomology, and for supervision and training of the competent staff who now carry on the work she started.

Professional Memberships

Miss Colcord's subject competence, like Miss Atwood's, is attested by the fact that she participated not only in library affairs through membership in the American Library Association and the D.C. Library Association, but that she was also a member of the Bibliographical Society of America and the American Association of University Women, and a fellow of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, the American Association of Economic Entomologists, the Entomological Society, the Biological Society, the Agricultural History Society, and others.

Maintaining the *Index . . . to the Literature of American Economic Entomology* currently consists in checking incoming publications daily, preparation of index entries on slips, with subject headings noted as the slips are made. These slips are filed, and at the end of each five-year period all the headings are reviewed and subdivisions are made where necessary. The list is then checked by specialists in the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine to decide on the form of scientific names used and on the adequacy and accuracy of the headings.

The typing of this manuscript from the slips is a gigantic job which requires about twenty people working for approximately a month, after which several months are spent on proofreading the typescript, the galley proof, and the page proof, which, in this bibliographical tool, is a prodigious task. The American Association of Economic Entomologists does the final editing of the typescript, provides the printing funds, and arranges for its publication and distribution. Its members, and all the staff of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine as well, have always been available to Miss Colcord and to others in the library for suggestions and assistance in this work.

To Miss Colcord her work is not just a task to be done but an integral part of her life. She has always brought to it a cooperative spirit and a rare quality of devoted service, enlivened by an irrepressible sense of humor. There are two things that any library user who came in contact with Miss Colcord soon learned to expect, namely, expert service and a merry quip to spice it.

Miss Lacy's Work

MARY GOODWIN LACY. Mary Goodwin Lacy, respected and loved throughout the library profession, came to the department library as student assistant in the summer of 1904 to learn, as she says, "what a catalog was for."

She then became librarian of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and remained in this position until 1910 when she took the position of reference assistant in the department library. From 1919 to 1921 she was agricultural librarian of Iowa State College and assistant in the Scripps Economic Bureau in Washington. From 1921 to date she has been in the Depart-

ment of Agriculture, first as librarian of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics Library and later as assistant department librarian.

As noted above, Miss Lacy first came to the department library to learn, but, to the profit of librarianship and bibliographical research, she stayed to teach. Probably her greatest single contribution has been the development of an outstanding staff of bibliographers and librarians through whom her great contributions to agricultural economics bibliography have been made.

Agricultural Economics Bibliography

Agricultural Economics Literature, now Section A of the *Bibliography of Agriculture*, has been recognized in journals at home and abroad as the most useful tool in its field. Miss Lacy's bibliographical work has always been on the firing line of research and administration in the field of agricultural economics. Among her bibliographies was *Food Control during Forty-Six Centuries: A Contribution to the History of Price Fixing*, which made a profound impression upon the agricultural leaders who were gathered in Washington in 1922 to consider price fixing. This study has been kept up to date by three comprehensive bibliographies on price fixing. The range of the work done under her supervision ran all the way from a 1500-page printed *Bibliography on Land Utilization, 1918-36* through hundreds of short typewritten lists and scores of comprehensive mimeographed bibliographies on subjects in her field of work.

These are contributions to research and administration and also provide examples of the development of new bibliographical technique.

Working in highly specialized and fre-

quently controversial fields, Miss Lacy obtained the cooperation of subject specialists in laying out the field of a bibliography, frequently secured their aid in the arrangement of the bibliography for maximum usefulness, and sometimes, in special cases, got them to write critical annotations when nothing short of critical annotations would serve the purpose.

The bibliographies in these series, therefore, are significant not only for the promptness with which they are issued and the adequacy of their coverage but also for the fact that most of them represent a very high level of both bibliographical and subject competence. This accounts for the frequency with which bibliographies in this series have carried off the Oberly award.

In addition to her library duties Miss Lacy has always carried a full load of responsibility in related fields of work. She not only belonged to her professional associations, including the American Library Association, the Special Libraries Association, the D.C. Library Association, and the Bibliographical Society of America, but was also active in the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, the American Economic Association, the American Farm Economics Association, the International Conference of Agricultural Economists, the Agricultural History Society, and the National Grange.

Miss Lacy's infinite patience, broad knowledge of department programs, history, and library service development, and especially her familiarity with the needs and work methods of administrators and research men in the economic and social science fields of the department, together with her never ending search for better ways to do everything that should be done

or must be done in a great research library, have been sources of unending inspiration to all of us. And her assistance to me, as a new librarian coming into this great, complex institution, in helping me obtain the necessary background quickly and accurately for all the work to be done, is a debt that cannot readily be repaid.

Diffusion of Knowledge

As Dr. William S. Learned has pointed out:

The distinction between discovery and spread . . . of ideas is clear, but it is often largely a matter of one's social philosophy or temperament as to which is considered to be of the greater importance. These two great processes of civilization are . . . complementary, for accurate knowledge

thoroughly diffused is, in the long run, the best possible preparation for fresh discovery.⁸

The careers of Miss Atwood, Miss Colcord, and Miss Lacy substantiate Dr. Learned's thesis that discovery and dissemination of knowledge must proceed together. The usefulness of their work to both the advancement and diffusion of knowledge is attested by scientists, administrators, and librarians alike. The bibliographical structures they have provided are the reference tools of today and the foundations upon which those whom they have trained may build the bibliographical tools of the future.

⁸ Learned, William S. *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge*. Harcourt, Brace, 1924, p. 3-4.

Activities of the Colorado Conference of Librarians of Institutions of Higher Learning

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might take, it is inevitable that we have been unable to turn our attention to smaller and less pretentious activities that would yield results of a more practical and useful nature. As yet we haven't done anything that has saved a single dollar.

But we agree that unless time can be found for both kinds of activities, for the time being at least we shall continue stirring up trouble and disturbing the status quo. That kind of thing seems to suit our collective predispositions very well.